

**FOUR**  
**SERMONS:**

**I. On MUTUAL SUBJECTION.**

**II. On CONSCIENCE.**

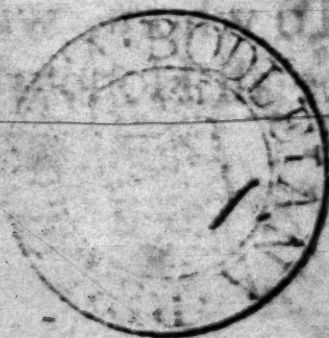
**III. On the TRINITY.**

**IV. The DIFFICULTY of KNOWING  
ONE'S SELF.**

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By the Reverend DR. *SWIFT*, Dean of  
*St. Patrick's, Dublin.*

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**DUBLIN,**  
Printed by **GEORGE FAULKNER.**  
**MDCCLX.**



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MDCCLXXII.



O N

## Mutual · SUBJECTION.

I St. PETER V. 5.

*—Yea, all of you be subject one to another.*

**T**HE Apostle having in many Parts of this Epistle, given Directions to Christians concerning the Duty of Subjection or Obedience to Superiors; in the several Instances of the Subject to his Prince, the Child to his Parent, the Servant to his Master, the Wife to the Husband, and the Younger to the Elder; doth here, in the Words of the Text, sum up the Whole, by advancing a Point of Doctrine, which at first may appear a little extraordinary; *Yea, all of you, saith he, be subject one to another.* For, it should seem, that two Persons cannot properly be said to be subject to each other, and that Subjection is only due from Inferiors to those above them; yet

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Saint



Saint *Paul* hath several Passages to the same Purpose. For he exhorts the *Romans*, in Honour to prefer one another; and the *Phillippians*, that in Lowliness of Mind they should let each esteem other better than themselves; and the *Ephesians*, that they should submit themselves one to another in the Fear of the Lord.

Rom. xii. 10.  
Phil. ii. 3.  
Ephes. v. 21.

Here we find these two great Apostles recommending to all Christians this Duty of mutual Subjection. For we may observe by Saint *Peter*, that having mentioned the several Relations which Men bear to each other, as Governor and Subject, Master and Servant, and the rest which I have already repeated, he maketh no Exception, but summeth up the Whole, with commanding, *All to be subject one to another*. From whence we may conclude, that this Subjection, due from all Men to all Men, is something more than the Compliment of Course, when our Betters are pleased to tell us, they are our humble Servants, but understand to be their Slaves.

I know very well, that some of those who explain this Text, apply it to Humility, to the Duties of Charity, to private Exhortations, and to bearing with each other's Infirmities; and, it is probable, the Apostle may have had a Regard to all these: But, however, many learned Men agree, that there is something more understood, and so the Words in their plain natural Meaning must import; as you will



will observe yourselves, if you read them with the beginning of the Verse, which is thus: *Likewise ye Younger submit yourselves unto the Elder: Yea all of you be subject one to another.* So that, upon the Whole, there must be some kind of Subjection due from every Man to every Man, which cannot be made void by any Power, Præ-eminence, or Authority whatever. Now, what Sort of Subjection this is, and how it ought to be paid, shall be the Subject of my present Discourse.

As God hath contrived all the Works of Nature to be useful, and in some Manner a Support to each other, by which the whole Frame of the World, under his Providence, is preserved and kept up; so, among Mankind, our particular Stations are appointed to each of us by God Almighty, wherein we are obliged to act, as far as our Power reacheth, towards the Good of the whole Community: And he who doth not perform that Part assigned him, towards advancing the Benefit of the Whole, in Proportion to his Opportunities and Abilities, is not only an useless, but a very mischievous Member of the Publick; because he taketh his Share of the Profit, and yet leaveth his Share of the Burden to be borne by others, which is the true principal Cause of most Miseries and Misfortunes in Life; for, a wise Man who doth not assist with his Counsels, a great Man with his Protection, a rich Man with his Bounty and Charity, and a poor Man



with his Labour, are perfect Nuisances in a Commonwealth; neither is any Condition of Life more honourable in the Sight of God than another, otherwise he would be a Respector of Persons, which he assureth us he is not: For he hath proposed the same Salvation to all Men, and hath only placed them in different Ways or Stations to work it out. Princes are born with no more Advantages of Strength or Wisdom than other Men; and, by an unhappy Education, are usually more defective in both than thousands of their Subjects. They depend for every Necessary of Life upon the meanest of their People: Besides, Obedience and Subjection were never enjoined by God to humour the Passions, Lusts, and Vanities of those who demand them from us; but we are commanded to obey our Governors, because Disobedience would breed Seditions in the State. Thus, Servants are directed to obey their Masters, Children, their Parents, and Wives their Husbands; not from any Respect of Persons in God, but because otherwise there would be nothing but Confusion in private Families. This Matter will be clearly explained, by considering the Comparison which Saint *Paul* maketh between the Church of Christ, and the natural Body of Man; for the same Resemblance will hold, not only to Families and Kingdoms, but to the whole Corporation of Mankind. *The Eye,*  
Rom. xii. 21. *saith he, cannot say unto the Hand,*  
c. xxiii. 26. *I have*



*I have no Need of thee; nor again the Hand to the Foot, I have no Need of thee. Nay, much more, those Members of the Body which seem to be more feeble, are necessary. And whether one Member suffer, all the Members suffer with it; or one Member be honoured, all the Members rejoice with it. The Case is directly the same among Mankind. The Prince cannot say to the Merchant I have no Need of thee; nor the Merchant to the Labourer, I have no Need of thee; nay, much more those Members, &c. for the Poor are generally more necessary Members of the Commonwealth than the Rich; which clearly shews, that God never intended such Possessions for the Sake and Service of those to whom he lends them; but because he hath assigned every Man his particular Station to be useful in Life; and this for the Reason given by the Apostle, *that there may be no Schism in the Body.**

From hence may partly be gathered the Nature of that Subjection which we all owe to one another. God Almighty hath been pleased to put us into an imperfect State, where we have perpetual Occasions of each other's Assistance. There is none so low, as not to be in a Capacity of assisting the highest; nor so high, as not to want the Assistance of the lowest.

It plainly appeareth, from what hath been said, that no one human Creature is more worthy than another in the Sight of God; farther, than according to the Goodness or



Holiness of their Lives; and, that Power, Wealth, and the like outward Advantages, are so far from being the Marks of God's approving or preferring those on whom they are bestowed, that, on the contrary, he is pleased to suffer them to be almost engrossed by those who have least Title to his Favour. Now, according to this Equality wherein God hath placed all Mankind, with relation to himself, you will observe, that in all the Relations between Man and Man, there is a mutual Dependence, whereby the one cannot subsist without the other. Thus, no Man can be a Prince without Subjects, nor a Master without Servants, nor a Father without Children. And this both explaineth and confirmeth the Doctrine of the Text: For, where there is a mutual Dependence, there must be a mutual Duty, and consequently a mutual Subjection. For Instances: The Subject must obey his Prince, because God commandeth it, human Laws require it, and the Safety of the Publick maketh it necessary. (For the same Reasons we must obey all who are in Authority, and submit ourselves, not only to the Good and Gentle, but also to the Froward, whether they rule according to our liking or no.) On the other Side, in those Countries that pretend to Freedom, Princes are subject to those Laws which their People have chosen; they are bound to protect their Subjects in Liberty, Property, and Religion; to receive their Petitions, and redress their Grievances:



## MUTUAL SUBJECTION.

vances: So, that the best Prince is, in the Opinion of wise Men, only the greatest Servant of the Nation; not only a Servant to the Publick in general, but in some Sort to every Man in it. In the like Manner, a Servant oweth Obedience, and Diligence, and Faithfulness to his Master, from whom, at the Time, he hath a just Demand for Protection, and Maintenance, and gentle Treatment: Nay, even the poor Beggar hath a just Demand of an Alms from the rich Man, who is guilty of Fraud, Injustice, and Oppression, if he doth not afford Relief according to his Abilities.

But this Subjection we all owe one another is no where more necessary, than in the Common Conversations of Life; for without it there could be no Society among Men. If the Learned would not sometimes submit to the Ignorant, the Wise to the Simple, the Gentle to the Froward, the old to the Weaknesses of the Young, there would be nothing but everlasting Variance in the World. This our Saviour himself confirmed by his own Example; for he appeared in the Form of a Servant, and washed his Disciples Feet, adding these memorable Words, *Ye call me Lord and Master, and ye say well, for so I am. If I then your Lord and Master wash your Feet, how much more ought ye to wash one another's Feet?* Under which Expression of washing the Feet, is included all that Subjection, Assistance, Love, and Duty, which every good Christian ought



to pay his Brother, in whatever Station God hath placed him. For the greatest Prince and the meanest Slave are not by infinite Degrees so distant, as our Saviour and those Disciples whose Feet he vouchsafed to wash.

And, although this Doctrine of subjecting ourselves to one another, may seem to grate upon the Pride and Vanity of Mankind, and may therefore be hard to be digested by those who value themselves upon their Greatness or their Wealth; yet, is it really no more than what most Men practise upon other Occasions. For, if our Neighbour, who is our Inferior, cometh to see us, we rise to receive him, we place him above us, and respect him as if he were better than ourselves; and this is thought both decent and necessary, and is usually called good Manners. Now the Duty required by the Apostle is, only that we should enlarge our Minds; and that what we thus practise in the common Course of Life, we should imitate in all our Actions and Proceedings whatever; since our Saviour telleth us, that every Man is our Neighbour; and, since we are so ready in the Point of Civility, to yield to others in our own Houses, where only we have any Title to govern.

Having thus shewn you what Sort of Subjection it is which all Men owe one to another, and in what Manner it ought to be paid, I shall now draw some Observations from what hath been said.

And,



And, FIRST, A thorough Practice of this Duty of subjecting ourselves to the Wants and Infirmities of each other, would utterly extinguish in us the Vice of Pride. For, if God hath pleased to entrust me with a Talent, not for my own Sake, but for the Service of others, and at the same Time hath left me full of Wants and Necessities which others must supply, I can then have no Cause to set any extraordinary Value upon myself, or to despise my Brother, because he hath not the same Talents which were lent to me. His Being may probably be as useful to the Publick as mine; and therefore, by the Rule of right Reason, I am in no Sort preferable to him.

SECONDLY, It is very manifest from what hath been said, that no Man ought to look upon the Advantages of Life, such as Riches, Honour, Power, and the like, as his Property, but merely as a Trust, which God hath deposited with him, to be employed for the Use of his Brethren; and God will certainly punish the Breach of that Trust, although the Laws of Man will not, or rather indeed cannot; because the Trust was conferred only by God, who hath not left it to any Power on Earth to decide infallibly, whether a Man maketh a good Use of his Talents or no, or to punish him where he faileth. And therefore God seemeth to have more particularly taken this Matter into his own Hands, and will most certainly



certainly reward or punish us in Proportion to our good or ill Performance in it. Now, although the Advantages which one Man possesseth more than another, may, in some Sense, be called his Property with respect to other Men, yet, with respect to God, they are, as I said, only a Trust; which will plainly appear from hence. If a Man doth not use those Advantages to the Good of the Publick, or the Benefit of his Neighbour, it is certain he doth not deserve them; and consequently, that God never intended them for a Blessing to him; and, on the other Side, whoever doth employ his Talents as he ought, will find, by his own Experience, that they were chiefly lent him for the Service of others; for the Service of others he will certainly employ them.

THIRDLY, If we could all be brought to practice this Duty of subjecting ourselves to each other, it would very much contribute to the general Happiness of Mankind: For this would root out Envy and Malice from the Heart of a Man; because you cannot envy your Neighbour's Strength, if he maketh Use of it to defend your Life, or carry your Burden; you cannot envy his Wisdom, if he giveth you good Counsel; nor his Riches, if he supplieth you in your Wants; nor his Greatness, if he employeth it to your Protection. The Miseries of Life are not properly owing to the unequal Distribution of Things; but God Almighty, the great King of Heaven, is treated like



like the Kings of the Earth; who, although, perhaps, intending well themselves, have often most abominable Ministers and Stewards, and those generally the vilest, to whom they entrust the most Talents. But here is the Difference, that the Princes of this World see by other Men's Eyes, but God sees all Things; and, therefore, whenever he permitteth his Blessings to be dealt among those who are unworthy, we may certainly conclude, that he intends them as a Punishment to an evil World, as well as to the Owners. It were well, if those would consider this, whose Riches serve them only as a Spur to Avarice, or as an Instrument to their Lusts; whose Wisdom is only of this World, to put false Colours upon Things; to call Good, Evil, and Evil, Good, against the Conviction of their own Consciences; and, lastly, who employ their Power and Favour in Acts of Oppression or Injustice, in misrepresenting Persons and Things, or in countenancing the Wicked to the Ruin of the Innocent.

FOURTHLY, The Practice of this Duty of being subject to one another would make us rest contented in the several Stations of Life wherein God has thought fit to place us; because it would, in the best and easiest Manner, bring us back as it were to that early State of the Gospel, when Christians had all Things in common. For, if the Poor found the Rich disposed to supply their Wants; if the Ignorant



rant found the Wise ready to instruct and direct them; or, if the Weak might always find Protection from the Mighty; they could none of them, with the least Pretence of Justice, lament their own Condition.

From all that hath been hitherto said, it appears, that great Abilities of any Sort, when they are employed as God directeth, do but make the Owners of them greater and more painful Servants to their Neighbour and the Publick: However, we are by no Means to conclude from hence, that they are not really Blessings, when they are in the Hands of good Men. For, first, what can be a greater Honour than to be chosen one of the Stewards and Dispensers of God's Bounty to Mankind? What is there, that can give a generous Spirit more Pleasure and Complacency of Mind, than to consider, that he is an Instrument of doing much Good? That great Numbers owe to him, under God, their Subsistence, their Safety, their Health, and the good Conduct of their Lives? The wickedest Man upon Earth, taketh a Pleasure in doing Good or those he loveth; and therefore, surely, a good Christian, who obeyeth our Saviour's Command of loving all Men, cannot but take Delight in doing Good even to his Enemies. God, who giveth all Things to all men, can receive nothing from any; and those among Men, who do the most Good, and receive the fewest Returns,



Returns, do most resemble their Creator; for which Reason, Saint *Paul* delivereth it as a Saying of our Saviour that *it is more blessed to give than to receive*. By this Rule, what must become of those Things which the World valueth as the greatest Blessings, Riches, Power, and the like, when our Saviour plainly determines, that the best Way to make them Blessings, is to part with them? Therefore, although the Advantages which one Man hath over another, may be called Blessings, yet they are by no Means so in the Sense the World usually understandeth. Thus, for Example: Great Riches are no Blessings in themselves; because the poor Man, with the common Necessaries of Life, enjoyeth more Health, and hath fewer Cares without them. How then do they become Blessings? No otherwise, than by employing them in feeding the Hungry, cloathing the Naked, rewarding worthy Men, and, in short, doing Acts of Charity and Generosity. Thus, likewise, Power is no Blessing in itself, because private Men bear less Envy, and Trouble, and Anguish without it: But, when it is employed to protect the Innocent, to relieve the Oppressed, and to punish the Oppressor, then it becometh a great Blessing. And so, lastly, even great Wisdom is, in the Opinion of *Solomon*, not a Blessing in itself; for, *in much Wisdom is much Sorrow*; and Men of common Understandings, if they serve God, and mind their Callings, make  
fewer



fewer Mistakes in the Conduct of Life, than those who have better Heads. And yet, Wisdom is a mighty Blessing, when it is applied to good Purposes; to instruct the Ignorant, to be a faithful Counsellor in publick or private, to be a Director to Youth, and to many other Ends needless here to mention.

To conclude:

God sent us into the World to obey his Commands, by doing as much Good as our Abilities will reach, and as little Evil as our many Infirmities will permit. Some he hath only trusted with one Talent, some with Five, and some with Ten. No Man is without his Talent; and he that is faithful or negligent in a little, shall be rewarded or punished, as well as he that hath been so in a great deal.

Consider what hath been said, &c.



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ON THE  
Testimony of CONSCIENCE.

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2 COR. I. Part of the 12th Verse.

—*For our Rejoicing is this, the Testimony of  
our Conscience.*

**T**HERE is no Word more frequent in the Mouths of Men, than that of *Conscience*, and the Meaning of it is in some Measure generally understood: However, because it is likewise a Word extremely abused by many People, who apply other Meanings to it, which God Almighty never intended, I shall explain it to you in the clearest Manner I am able. The Word *Conscience* properly signifies that Knowledge which a Man hath within himself of his own Thoughts and Actions; and because, if a Man judgeth fairly of his own Actions, by comparing them with the Law of God, his Mind will either approve  
or



or condemn him, according as he hath done Good or Evil; therefore the Knowledge or Conscience may properly be called both an Accuser and a Judge. So that, whenever our Conscience accuseth us, we are certainly guilty; but we are not always innocent, when it doth not accuse us; for very often, through the Hardness of our Hearts, or the Fondness and Favour we bear to ourselves, or through Ignorance, or Neglect, we do not suffer our Conscience to take any Cognizance of several Sins we commit. There is another Office likewise, belonging to Conscience, which is that of being our Director and Guide; and the wrong Use of this hath been the Occasion of more Evils under the Sun, than almost all other Causes put together. For, as Conscience is nothing else but the Knowledge we have of what we are Thinking and Doing; so it can guide us no farther than that Knowledge reacheth; and therefore God hath placed Conscience in us to be our Director only in those Actions which Scripture and Reason plainly tells us to be good or evil: But in Cases too difficult or doubtful for us to comprehend to determine, their Conscience is not concerned; because it cannot advise in what it doth not understand, nor decide where it is itself in doubt; but by God's great Mercy, those difficult Points are never of absolute Necessity to our Salvation. There is likewise another Evil, that Men often say, a Thing is against their Conscience,



Conscience, when really it is not. For instance: Ask any of those who differ from the Worship established, why they do not come to Church? They will say, they dislike the Ceremonies, the Prayers, the Habits, and the like, and therefore it goeth against their Conscience: But they are mistaken, their Teacher hath put those Words into their Mouth; for a Man's Conscience can go no higher than his Knowledge; and therefore, until he has thoroughly examined by Scripture, and the Practice of the ancient Church, whether those Points are blameable or no, his Conscience cannot possibly direct him to condemn them. Hence have likewise arisen those Mistakes about what is usually called, *Liberty of Conscience*; which, properly speaking, is no more than a Liberty of knowing our own Thoughts; which Liberty no one can take from us. But those Words have obtained quite different Meaning. Liberty of Conscience is now-a-days not only understood to be the Liberty of believing what Men please, but also of endeavouring to propagate the Belief as much as they can, and to overthrow the Faith which the Laws have already established, to be rewarded by the Publick for those wicked Endeavours: And this is the Liberty of Conscience which the Fanaticks are now openly, in the Face of the World, endeavouring at with their utmost Application. At the same Time it cannot but be observed, that those very Per-

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sons,



sons, who, under a Pretence of a publick Spirit, and Tenderneſs towards their Chriſtian Brethren, are ſo jealous for ſuch a Liberty of Conſcience as this, are of all others the leaſt tender of thoſe who differ from them in the ſmalleſt Point relating to Government; and I wiſh I could not ſay, that the Majeſty of the living God may be offended with more Security than the Memory of a dead Prince. But the Wiſdom of the World at preſent, ſeemeth to agree with that of the Heathen Emperor, who ſaid, If the Gods were offended, it was their own Concern, and they were able to vindicate themſelves.

But although Conſcience hath been abuſed to thoſe wicked Purpoſes which I have already related, yet a due Regard to the Directions it plainly giveth us, as well as to its Accuſations, Reproaches, and Advices, would be of the greateſt Uſe to Mankind, both for their preſent Welfare, and future Happineſs.

Therefore, my Diſcourſe, at this Time, ſhall be directed to prove to you, that there is no ſolid, firm Foundation for Virtue, but on a Conſcience which is guided by Religion.

In order to this, I ſhall firſt ſhew you the Weakneſs and Uncertainty of two falſe Principles which many People ſet up in the Place of Conſcience, for a Guide to their Actions.

The firſt of theſe falſe Principles is, what the World uſually calleth *Moral Honesty*. There are ſome People, who appear very in-  
different



different as to Religion, and yet have the Repute of being just and fair in their Dealings; and these are generally known by the Character of good moral Men. But now, if you look into the Grounds and Motives of such a Man's Actions, you shall find them to be no other than his own Ease and Interest. For Example: You trust a moral Man with your Money in the Way of Trade; you trust another with the Defence of your Cause at Law; and perhaps they both deal justly with you. Why? Not from any Regard they have for Justice, but because their Fortune dependeth upon their Credit, and a Stain of open publick Dishonesty must be to their Disadvantage. But let it consist with such a Man's Interest and Safety to wrong you, and then it will be impossible you can have any Hold upon him; because there is nothing left to give him a Check, or to put in the Balance against his Profit. For, if he hath nothing to govern himself by, but the Opinion of the World, as long as he can conceal his Injustice from the World, he thinketh himself safe.

Besides, it is found by Experience, that those Men who set up for Morality, without regard to Religion, are generally but virtuous in Part; they will be just in their Dealings between Man and Man; but if they find themselves disposed to Pride, Lust, Intemperance, or Avarice, they do not think their Morality concerned to check them in any of these Vices,



because it is the great Rule of such Men, that they may lawfully follow the Dictates of Nature, where-ever their Safety, Health, and Fortune are not injured. So that, upon the Whole, there is hardly one Vice which a meer moral Man may not, upon some Occasions, allow himself to practise.

The other false Principle, which some Men set up in the Place of Conscience, to be their Director in Life, is what those who pretend to it, call *Honour*.

This Word is often made the Sanction of an Oath; it is reckoned a great Commendation to be a Man of strict Honour; and it is commonly understood, that a Man of Honour can never be guilty of a base Action. This is usually the Stile of military Men; of Persons with Titles; and of others who pretend to Birth and Quality. It is true, indeed, that in ancient Times, it was universally understood, that Honour was the Reward of Virtue; but if such Honour, as is now-a-days going, will not permit a Man to do a base Action, it must be allowed, there are very few such Things as base Actions in Nature. No Man of Honour, as that Word is usually understood, did ever pretend that his Honour obliged him to be chaste or temperate; to pay his Creditors; to be useful to his Country; to do good to Mankind; to endeavour to be wise or learned; to regard his Word, his Promise, or his Oath; or, if he hath any of these Virtues, they were  
never



never learned in the Catechism of Honour; which containeth but two Precepts, the punctual Payment of Debts contracted at Play, and the right understanding the several Degrees of an Affront, in order to revenge it by the Death of an Adversary.

But suppose this Principal of Honour, which some Men so much boast of, did really produce more Virtues than it ever pretended to; yet, since the very Being of that Honour dependeth upon the Breath, the Opinion, or the Fancy of the People, the Virtues derived from it could be of no long or certain Duration. For Example: Suppose a Man, from a Principle of Honour, should resolve to be just, or chaste, or temperate, and yet the censuring World should take a Humour of refusing him those Characters, he would then think the Obligation at an End; or, on the other Side, if he thought he could gain Honour by the falsest and vilest Actions, (which is a Case that very often happeneth) he would then make no Scruple to perform it. And God knoweth, it would be an unhappy State, to have the Religion, the Liberty, or the Property of a People lodged in such Hands, which, however, hath been too often the Case.

What I have said upon this Principle of Honour may, perhaps, be thought of small Concernment to most of you who are my Hearers; however, a Caution was not altogether unnecessary, since there is nothing by which not



only the Vulgar, but the honest Tradesman, hath been so much deceived, as this infamous Pretence to Honour in too many of their Betters.

Having thus shewn you the Weakness and Uncertainty of those Principles which some Men set up in the Place of Conscience to direct them in their Actions, I shall now endeavour to prove to you, that there is no solid, firm foundation of Virtue, but in a Conscience directed by the Principles of Religion.

There is no Way of judging how far we may depend upon the Actions of Men, otherwise than by knowing the Motives and Grounds, and Causes of them; and, if the Motives of our Actions be not resolved and determined into the Law of God, they will be precarious and uncertain, and liable to perpetual Changes. I will shew you what I mean, by an Example: Suppose a Man thinketh it his Duty to obey his Parents, because Reason telleth him so, because he is obliged by Gratitude, and because the Laws of his Country command him to do so: But, if he stoppeth here, his Parents can have no lasting Security; for an Occasion may happen, wherein it may be extremely his Interest to be disobedient, and where the Laws of the Land can lay no hold upon him: Therefore, before such a Man can safely be trusted, he must proceed farther, and consider, that his Reason is the Gift of God; that God commanded him to be obedient to  
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the Laws; and did moreover, in a particular Manner, enjoin him to be dutiful to his Parents; after which, if he layeth a due Weight upon those Considerations, he will probably continue in his Duty to the End of his Life; Because no earthly Interest can ever come in Competition to balance the Danger of offending his Creator, or the Happiness of pleasing him. And of all this his Conscience will certainly inform him, if he hath any Regard to Religion.

SECONDLY, Fear and Hope are the two greatest natural Motives of all Men's Actions; but neither of these Passions will ever put us in the Way of Virtue, unless they be directed by Conscience. For although virtuous Men do sometimes accidentally make their Way to Preferment, yet the World is so corrupted, that no Man can reasonably hope to be rewarded in it, merely upon Account of his Virtue. And consequently, the Fear of Punishment in this Life, will preserve Men from very few Vices, since some of the blackest and basest do often prove the surest Steps to Favour; such as Ingratitude, Hypocrisy, Treachery, Malice, Subornation, Atheism, and many more which human Laws do little concern themselves about. But when Conscience placeth before us the Hopes of everlasting Happiness, and the Fears of everlasting Misery, as the Reward and Punishment of our good or evil Actions, our Reason can find no Way to avoid



the Force of such an Argument, otherwise than by running into Infidelity.

L A S T L Y, Conscience will direct us to love God, and to put our whole Trust and Confidence in him. Our Love of God will inspire us with a Detestation for Sin, as what is of all Things most contrary to his divine Nature; and, if we have an intire Confidence in him, *that* will enable us to subdue and devise all the Allurements of the World.

It may here be objected, If Conscience be so sure a Director to us Christians in the Conduct of our Lives, how cometh it to pass, that the ancient Heathens, who had no other Lights but those of Nature and Reason, should so far exceed us in all manner of Virtue, as plainly appeareth by many Examples they have left on Record?

To which it may be answered: First, those Heathens were extremely strict and exact in the Education of their Children; whereas, amongst us, this Care is so much laid aside, that the more God hath blessed any Man with Estate or Quality, just so much less in Proportion is the Care he taketh in the Education of his Children, and particularly of that Child which is to inherit his Fortune; of which the Effects are visible enough among the Great Ones of the World. Again, those Heathens did, in a particular Manner, instil the Principle into their Children of loving their Country; which is so far otherwise now-a-days, that of  
the



the several Parties amongst us, there is none of them that seem to have so much as heard, whether there be such a Virtue in the World; as plainly appeareth by their Practices, and especially when they are placed in those Stations where they can only have Opportunity of shewing it. Lastly, the most considerable among the Heathens, did generally believe Rewards and Punishments in a Life to come, which is the great Principle for Conscience to work upon; whereas, too many of those who would be thought the most considerable among us do, both by their Practices and their Discourses, plainly affirm, that they believe nothing at all of the Matter.

Wherefore, since it hath manifestly appeared, that a religious Conscience is the only true solid Foundation upon which Virtue can be built, give me Leave, before I conclude, to let you see how necessary such a Conscience is, to conduct us in every Station and Condition of our Lives.

That a religious Conscience is necessary in any Station, is confessed, even by those who tell us, that all Religion was invented by cunning Men, in order to keep the World in Awe. For, if Religion, by the Confession of its Adversaries, be necessary towards the well-governing of Mankind, then every wise Man in Power will be sure, not only to chuse out for every Station under him such Persons as are most likely to be kept in Awe by Religion,  
but



but likewise to carry some Appearance of it himself, or else he is a very weak Politician: And accordingly, in any Country where great Persons affect to be open Despisers of Religion, their Counsels will be found at last to be fully as destructive to the State as the Church.

It was the Advice of *Jethro* to his Son-in-Law *Moses*, to provide able Men, such as fear God, Men of Truth, hating Covetousness, and to place such over the People; and *Moses*, who was as wise a Statesman, at least, as any in this Age, thought fit to follow that Advice. Great Abilities, without the Fear of God, are most dangerous Instruments, when they are trusted with Power. The Laws of Man have thought fit, that those who are called to any Office of Trust, should be bound by an Oath to the faithful Discharge of it; but an Oath is an Appeal to God, and therefore can have no Influence, except upon those who believe that he IS, and that he is a Rewarder of those that seek him, and a Punisher of those who disobey him: And therefore, we see, the Laws themselves are forced to have Recourse to Conscience in those Cases, because their Penalties cannot reach the Arts of cunning Men, who can find Ways to be guilty of a thousand Injustices, without being discovered, or at least without being punished. And the Reason why we find so many Frauds, Abuses, and Corruptions, where any Trust is conferred, can be no other than that there is so little Conscience



Conscience and Religion left in the World, or at least their Men in their Choice of Instruments have private Ends in View, which are very different from the Service of the Publick. Besides, it is certain, that Men who profess to have no Religion, are full as zealous to bring over Profelytes, as any Papist or Fanatick can be; and therefore, if those who are in Station high enough to be of Influence or Example to others; if those, I say, openly profess a Contempt or Disbelief of Religion, they will be sure to make all their Dependents of their own Principles; and what Security can the Publick expect from such Persons, whenever their Interests or their Lusts come into Competition with their Duty? It is very possible for a Man who has the Appearance of Religion, and a great Pretender to Conscience, to be wicked, and an Hypocrite; but it is impossible for a Man, who openly declareth against Religion, to give any reasonable Security that he will not be false, and cruel, and corrupt, whenever a Temptation offereth, which he valueth more than he doth the Power wherewith he was trusted. And, if such a Man doth not betray his Cause and his Master, it was only because the Temptation was not properly offered, or the Profit was too small, or the Danger too great. And hence it is, that we find so little Truth or Justice among us, because there are so very few, who either in the Service of the Publick, or in common Dealings



Dealings with each other, do ever look farther than their own Advantage, and how to guard themselves against the Laws of the Country; which a Man may do by Favour, by Secrecy, or by Cunning, although he breaketh almost every Law of God.

Therefore to conclude: It plainly appears, that unless Men are guided by the Advice and Judgment of a Conscience founded on Religion, they can give no Security that they will be either good Subjects, faithful Servants of the Publick, or honest in their mutual Dealings; since there is no other Tie through which the Pride, or Lust, or Avarice, or Ambition of Mankind will not certainly break one Time or other.

Consider what hath been said, &c.



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O N T H E

T R I N I T Y.

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1 Epist. Gen. of St. JOHN, V. 7.

*For there are Three that bear Record in Heaven,  
the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost;  
and these Three are One.*

**T**HIS Day being set apart to acknowledge our Belief in the Eternal TRINITY, I thought it might be proper to employ my present Discourse entirely upon that Subject; and, I hope, to handle it in such a Manner, that the most Ignorant among you, may return home better informed of your Duty in this great Point, than probably you are at present.

It must be confessed, that by the Weakness and Indiscretion of busy (or, at best, of well-meaning) People, as well as by the Malice of those who are Enemies to all Revealed Religion, and are not content to possess their own Infidelity in Silence, without communicating it to the Disturbance of Mankind; I say, by these Means, it must be confessed, that the Doctrine of the Trinity hath suffered very much,



much, and made Christianity suffer along with it. For these two Things must be granted: First, That Men of wicked Lives would be very glad there were no Truth in Christianity at all: And, secondly, If they can pick out any one single Article in the Christian Religion which appeareth not agreeable to their own corrupted Reason, or to the Arguments of those bad People, who follow the Trade of seducing others, they presently conclude, that the Truth of the whole Gospel must sink along with that one Article; which is just as wise, as if a Man should say, because he disliketh one Law of his Country, he will therefore observe no Law at all; and yet, that one Law may be very reasonable in itself, although he doth not allow it, or doth not know the Reason of the Lawgivers.

Thus it hath happened with the great Doctrine of the Trinity; which Word is indeed not in Scripture, but was a Term of Art invented in the earlier Times, to express the Doctrine by a single Word, for the Sake of Brevity and Convenience. The Doctrine then, as delivered in Holy Scripture, although not exactly in the same Words, is very short, and amounteth only to this, That the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, are each of them God, and yet that there is but One God. For, as to the Word *Person*, when we say there are Three Persons; and as to those other Explanations in the *Atbanasian Creed*, this Day read  
to



to you, (whether complied by *Athanasius*, or no) there were taken up three hundred Years after Christ to expound this Doctrine; and I will tell you upon what Occasion. About that Time there sprang up an Heresy of a People called *Arians*, from one *Arius* the Leader of them. These denied our Saviour to be God, although they allowed all the rest of the Gospel (wherein they were most sincere than their Followers among us.) Thus the Christian World was divided into two Parts, until, at length, by the Zeal and Courage of Saint *Athanasius*, the *Arians* were condemned in a general Council, and a Creed formed upon the true Faith, as Saint *Athanasius* hath settled it. This Creed is now read at certain Times in our Churches, which, although it is useful for Edification to those who understand it; yet, since it containeth some nice and philosophical Points, which few People can comprehend, the Bulk of Mankind is obliged to believe no more than the Scripture-Doctrine, as I have delivered it. Because that Creed was intended only as an Answer to the *Arians* in their own Way, who were very subtle Disputers.

But this Heresy having revived in the World about an hundred Years ago, and continued ever since; not out of a Zeal to Truth, but to give a Loose to Wickedness, by throwing off all Religion; several Divines, in order to answer the Cavils of those Adversaries to Truth  
and



and Morality, began to find out farther Explanations of this Doctrine of the Trinity, by Rules of Philosophy; which have multiplied Controversies to such a Degree, as to beget Scruples that have perplexed the Minds of many sober Christians, who otherwise could never have entertained them.

I must therefore be so bold to affirm, that the Method taken by many of those learned Men, to defend the Doctrine of the Trinity, hath been founded upon a Mistake.

It must be allowed, that every Man is bound to follow the Rules and Directions of that Measure of Reason which God hath given him; and, indeed, he cannot do otherwise, if he will be sincere, or act like a Man. For Instance: If I should be commanded by an Angel from Heaven to believe it is Mid-night at Noon-day, yet I could not believe him: So, if I were directly told in Scripture, That *Three* are *One*, and *One* is *Three*, I could not conceive or believe it in the natural common Sense of that Expression, but must suppose that something dark or mystical was meant, which it pleased God to conceal from me, and from all the World. Thus, in the Text, *There are Three that bear Record, &c.* Am I capable of knowing and defining what Union, and what Distinction, there may be in the Divine Nature? which possibly may be hid from the Angels themselves. Again, I see it plainly declared in Scripture, that there is but one God; and



and yet I find our Saviour claiming the Prerogative of God in knowing Men's Thoughts; in saying, *He and his Father are One*; and before Abraham *was, I am*. I read, that the Disciples worshipped him; that *Thomas* said to him, *My Lord and My God*. And Saint *John*, Chap. 1. *In the Beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God*. I read likewise, that the Holy Ghost bestowed the Gift of Tongues, and the Power of working Miracles; which, if rightly considered, is as great a Miracle as any, that a Number of illiterate Men, should of a sudden be qualified to speak all the Languages then known in the World; such as could be done by the Inspiration of God alone. From these several Texts it is plain, that God commandeth us to believe there is an Union, and there is a Distinction; but what that Union, or what that Distinction is, all Mankind are equally ignorant, and must continue so, at least until the Day of Judgment, without some new Revelation.

But because I cannot conceive the Nature of this Union and Distinction in the Divine Nature, am I therefore to reject them as absurd and impossible; as I would if any one told me, that three Men are one, and one Man is three? We are told, that a Man and his Wife are one Flesh: This I can comprehend the Meaning of, yet, literally taken, it is a Thing impossible. But the Apostle telleth us, *We see but in*

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Part,



*Part, and we know but in Part*; and yet we would comprehend all the secret Ways and Workings of God.

Therefore I shall again repeat the Doctrine of the Trinity, as it is positively affirmed in Scripture; that God is there expressed in three different Names, as Father, as Son, and as Holy Ghost; that each of these is God, and that there is but one God. But this Union and Distinction are a Mystery utterly unknown to Mankind.

This is enough for any good Christian to believe on this great Article, without ever inquiring any farther: And this can be contrary to no Man's Reason, although the Knowledge of it is hid from him.

But there is another Difficulty of great Importance, among those who quarrel with the Doctrine of the Trinity, as well as with several other Articles of Christianity; which is, that our Religion aboundeth in Mysteries, and these they are so bold to revile as Cant, Imposture, and Priest-craft. It is impossible for us to determine for what Reasons God thought fit to communicate some Things to us in Part, and leave some Part a Mystery. But so it is in Fact, and so the Holy Scripture telleth us in several Places. For Instance: The Resurrection and Change of our Bodies are called Mysteries by Saint *Paul*; our Saviour's Incarnation is another; the Kingdom of God is called a Mystery by our Saviour, to be only known



known to his Disciples; so is Faith, and the Word of God, by Saint *Paul*. I omit many others. So, that to declare against all Mysteries without Distinction or Exception, is to declare against the whole Tenor of the New Testament.

There are two Conditions that may bring a Mystery under Suspicion. First, when it is not taught and commanded in Holy Writ; or, secondly, when the Mystery turneth to the Advantage of those who preach it to others. Now, as to the first, it can never be said, that we preach Mysteries without Warrant from Holy Scripture, although I confess this of the Trinity may have sometimes been explained by human Invention, which might, perhaps, better have been spared. As to the second; it will not be possible to charge the Protestant Priest-hood with proposing any temporal Advantage to themselves by broaching, or multiplying, or preaching of Mysteries. Does this Mystery of the Trinity, for Instance, and the Descent of the Holy Ghost, bring the least Profit or Power to the preachers? No; it is as great a Mystery to themselves as it is to the meanest of their Hearers; and may be rather a Cause of Humiliation, by putting their Understanding in that Point upon a Level with the most ignorant of their Flock. It is true, indeed, the *Roman Church* hath very much enriched herself by trading in Mysteries, for which they have not the least Authority from



Scripture, and were fitted only to advance their own temporal Wealth and Grandeur; such as *Transubstantiation, worshipping of Images, Indulgences for Sins, Purgatory, and Masses for the Dead*; with many more: But, it is the perpetual Talent of those who have Ill-will to our Church, or a Contempt for all Religion, taken up by the Wickedness of their Lives, to charge us with the Errors and Corruptions of Popery, which all Protestants have thrown off near two hundred Years; whereas those Mysteries held by us, have no Prospect of Power, Pomp, or Wealth; but have been ever maintained by the universal Body of true Believers from the Days of the Apostles, and will be so to the Resurrection; neither will the Gates of Hell prevail against them.

It may be thought, perhaps, a strange Thing, that God should require us to believe Mysteries, while the Reason or Manner of what we are to believe, is above our Comprehension, and wholly concealed from us: Neither doth it appear at first Sight, that the believing, or not believing them, doth concern either the Glory of God, or contribute to the Goodness or Wickedness of our Lives; but this is a great and dangerous Mistake. We see what a mighty Weight is laid upon Faith, both in the Old and New Testament. In the former we read, how the Faith of *Abraham* is praised, who could believe that God would raise from him a great Nation, at the very same Time  
that



that he was commanded to sacrifice his only Son, and despaired of any other Issue; and this was to him a great Mystery. Our Saviour is perpetually preaching Faith to his Disciples, or reproaching them with the Want of it; and Saint *Paul* produceth numerous Examples of the Wonders done by Faith. And all this is highly reasonable; for Faith is an entire Dependence upon the Truth, the Power, the Justice, and the Mercy of God; which Dependence will certainly incline us to obey him in all Things: So that the great Excellency of Faith consisteth in the Consequence it hath upon our Actions; as, if we depend upon the Truth and Wisdom of a Man, we shall certainly be more disposed to follow his Advice. Therefore, let no Man think that he can lead as good a moral Life without Faith, as with it; for this Reason, because he who hath no Faith, cannot, by the Strength of his own Reason or Endeavours, so easily resist Temptations, as the other who dependeth upon God's Assistance in the overcoming his Frailties, and is sure to be rewarded for ever in Heaven, for his Victory over them. *Faith*, says the Apostle, *is the Evidence of Things not seen*: He means, that Faith is a Virtue by which any Thing commanded us by God to believe, appeareth evident and certain to us, although we do not see, nor can conceive it; because, by Faith, we entirely depend upon the Truth and Power of God.



It is an old and true Distinction, that Things may be above our Reason, without being contrary to it. Of this Kind are the Power, the Nature, and the universal Presence of God, with innumerable other Points. How little do those who quarrel with Mysteries know of the commonest Actions of Nature? The Growth of an Animal, of a Plant, or of the smallest Seed, is a Mystery to the wisest among Men. If an Ignorant Person were told that a Loadstone would draw Iron at a Distance, he might say it was a Thing contrary to his Reason, and could not believe before he saw it with his Eyes.

The Manner whereby the Soul and Body are united, and how they are distinguished, is wholly unaccountable to us. We see but one Part, and yet we know we consist of two; and this is a Mystery we cannot comprehend, any more than that of the Trinity.

From what hath been said, it is manifest, that God did never command us to believe, nor his Ministers to preach, any Doctrine which is contrary to the Reason he hath pleased to endow us with; but for his own wise Ends, has thought fit to conceal from us, the Nature of the Thing he commands, thereby to try our Faith and Obedience, and encrease our Dependence upon him.

It is highly probable, that if God should please to reveal unto us this great Mystery of the Trinity, or some other Mysteries in our  
Holy



Holy Religion, we should not be able to understand them, unless he would at the same Time think fit to bestow on us, some new Powers or Faculties of the Mind, which we want at present, and are reserved until the Day of Resurrection to Life Eternal. *For now, as the Apostle sayeth, we see through a Glass darkly, but when Face to Face.*

Thus, we see, the Matter is brought to this Issue; we must either believe what God directly commandeth us in Holy Scripture, or we must wholly reject the Scripture, and the Christian Religion which we pretend to profess: But this, I hope, is too desperate a Step for any of us to make.

I have already observed, that those who preach up the Belief of the Trinity, or of any other Mystery, cannot propose any temporal Advantage to themselves by so doing. But this is not the Case of those who oppose these Doctrines. Do *they* lead better moral Lives than a good Christian? Are *they* more just in their Dealings? More chaste, or temperate, or charitable? Nothing at all of this; but on the contrary, their Intent is to overthrow all Religion, that they may gratify their Vices without any Reproach from the World, or their own Conscience; and are zealous to bring over as many others as they can to their own Opinions; because it is some kind of imaginary Comfort, to have a Multitude on their Side.



There is no Miracle mentioned in Holy Writ, which, if it were strictly examined, is not as much contrary to common Reason, and as much a Mystery as this Doctrine of the Trinity; and therefore we may, with equal Justice, deny the Truth of them all. For Instance: It is against the Laws of Nature, that a human Body should be able to walk upon the Water, as Saint *Peter* is recorded to have done; or that a dead Carcase should be raised from the Grave after three Days, when it began to be corrupted; which those who understand Anatomy, will pronounce to be impossible, by the common Rules of Nature and Reason. Yet these Miracles, and many others, are positively affirmed in the Gospel; and these we must believe, or give up our Holy Religion to Atheists and Infidels.

I shall now make a few Inferences and Observations from what hath been said.

FIRST, It would be well, if People would not lay so much Weight on their own Reason in Matters of Religion, as to think every Thing impossible and absurd which they cannot conceive. How often do we contradict the right Rules of Reason in the whole Course of our Lives? *Reason* itself is true and just, but the *Reason* of every particular Man is weak and wavering, perpetually swayed and turned by his Interests, his Passions, and his Vices. Let any Man but consider, when he hath a Controversy with another, although his Cause be  
ever



ever so unjust, although the World be against him, how blinded he is by the Love of himself, to believe that right is wrong, and wrong is right, when it maketh for his own Advantage. Where is then the right Use of his Reason, which he so much boasteth of, and which he would blasphemously set up to controul the Commands of the Almighty?

SECONDLY, When Men are tempted to deny the Mysteries of Religion, let them examine and search into their own Hearts, whether they have not some favourite Sin which is of their Party in this Dispute, and which is equally contrary to other Commands of God in the Gospel? For, why do Men love Darkness rather than Light? The Scripture telleth us, *Because their Deeds are evil*; and there can be no other Reason assigned. Therefore when Men are curious and inquisitive to discover some weak Sides in Christianity, and inclined to favour every Thing that is offered to its Disadvantage; it is plain they wish it were not true, and those Wishes can proceed from nothing but an evil Conscience; because, if there be Truth in our Religion, their Condition must be miserable.

And therefore, THIRDLY, Men should consider, that raising Difficulties concerning the Mysteries in Religion, cannot make them more wise, learned, or virtuous; better Neighbours, or Friends, or more serviceable to their Country; but, whatever they pretend, will destroy  
their



their inward Peace of Mind, by perpetual Doubts and Fears arising in their Breasts. And, God forbid we should ever see the Times so bad, when dangerous Opinions in Religion, will be a Means to get Favour and Preferment; although even in such a Case, it would be an ill Traffick, to gain the World, and lose our own Souls. So, that upon the Whole, it will be impossible to find any real Use towards a virtuous or happy Life, by denying the Mysteries of the Gospel.

FOURTHLY, Those strong Unbelievers, who expect that all Mysteries should be squared and fitted to their own Reason, might have somewhat to say for themselves, if they could satisfy the general Reason of Mankind in their other Opinions: But herein they are miserably defective, absurd, and ridiculous; they strain at a Gnat, and swallow a Camel; they can believe that the World was made by Chance; that God doth not concern himself with things below? Will neither punish Vice, nor reward Virtue; that Religion was invented by cunning Men, to keep the World in Awe; with many other Opinions equally false and detestable, against the common Light of Nature, as well as Reason; against the universal Sentiments of all civilized Nations; and offensive to the Ears even of a sober Heathen.

LASTLY, Since the World aboundeth with pestilent Books, particularly written against this Doctrine of the Trinity, it is fit to inform you, that



that the Authors of them proceed wholly upon a Mistake; they would shew how impossible it is that *Three* can be One, and *One* can be Three, whereas the Scripture sayeth no such Thing, at least in that Manner they would make it; but, only, that there is some kind of Unity and Distinction in the Divine Nature, which Mankind cannot possibly comprehend: Thus, the whole Doctrine is short and plain, and in itself incapable of any Controversy; since God himself hath pronounced the Fact, but wholly concealed the Manner; and therefore many Divines, who thought fit to answer those wicked Books, have been mistaken too, by answering Fools in their Folly; and endeavouring to explain a Mystery which God intended to keep secret from us. And, as I would exhort all Men to avoid reading those wicked Books, written against this Doctrine, as dangerous and pernicious; so I think they may omit the Answers as unnecessary. This, I confess, will probably affect but few or none among the Generality of our Congregations, who do not much trouble themselves with Books, at least of this kind. However, many, who do not read themselves, are seduced by others that do, and thus become unbelievers upon Trust, and at second-hand: And this is too frequent a Case; for which Reason I have endeavoured to put this Doctrine upon a short and sure Foot, levelled to the meanest Understanding; by which we may, as the Apostle directeth, be ready always to give an Answer to



to every Man that asketh us a Reason of the Hope that is in us, with Meekness and Fear.

And, thus I have done with my Subject, which probably I should not have chosen, if I had not been invited to it by the Occasion of this Season, appointed on Purpose to celebrate the Mysteries of the Trinity, and the Descent of the Holy Ghost, wherein we pray to be kept stedfast in this Faith; and what this Faith is, I have shewn you in the plainest Manner I could. For, upon the Whole, it is no more than this: God commandeth us, by our Dependence upon his Truth and his holy Word, to believe a Fact that we do not understand. And this is no more than what we do every Day in the Works of Nature, upon the Credit of Men of Learning. Without Faith we can do no Works acceptable to God; for, if they proceed from any other Principle, they will not advance our Salvation; and this Faith, as I have explained it, we may acquire, without giving up our Senses; or contradicting our Reason. May God of his infinite Mercy inspire us with true Faith in every Article and Mystery of our holy Religion, so as to dispose us to do what is pleasing in his Sight; and this we pray through JESUS CHRIST, to whom, with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, the mysterious, incomprehensible, ONE GOD, be all Honour and Glory, now and for evermore. *Amen.*



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T H E  
D I F F I C U L T Y  
O F  
K N O W I N G O N E ' S S E L F .

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2 KINGS viii. Part of the 13th Verse.

*And Hazael said, But what, is thy Servant a  
Dog, that he should do this great Thing?*

**W**E have a very signal Instance of the Deceitfulness of the Heart, represented to us in the Person of *Hazael*; who was sent to the Prophet *Elisha*, to inquire of the Lord concerning his Master the King of *Syria*'s Recovery. For the Man of God having told him that the King might recover from the Disorder he was then labouring under, began to set and fasten his Countenance upon him of a sudden, and to break out into the most violent  
Expres-



Expressions of Sorrow, and a deep Concern for it; whereupon, when *Hazael*, full of Shame and Confusion, asked, *Why weepeth my Lord?* He answered, *Because I know all the Evil that thou wilt do unto the Children of Israel; their strong Holds wilt thou set on Fire, and their young Men wilt thou slay with the Sword, and wilt dash their Children, and rip up their Women with Child.* Thus much did the Man of God say and know of him, by a Light darted into his Mind from Heaven. But *Hazael*, not knowing himself so well as the other did, was startled and amazed at the Relation, and would not believe it possible, that a Man of his Temper could ever run out into such enormous Instances of Cruelty and Inhumanity. *What,* sayeth he, *is thy Servant a Dog, that he should do this great Thing?*

And yet, for all this, it is highly propable, that he was then that very Man, he could not imagine himself to be; for we find him, on the very next Day after his Return, in a very treacherous and disloyal Manner, murdering his own Master, and usurping his Kingdom; which was but a Prologue to the said Tragedy which he afterwards acted upon the People of *Israel*.

And now the Case is but very little better with most Men, than it was with *Hazael*; however it cometh to pass, they are wonderfully unacquainted with their own Temper and Disposition, and know very little of what passeth within



within them: For of so many proud, ambitious, revengeful, envying, and ill-natured Persons that are in the World, where is there one of them, who, although he hath all the Symptoms of the Vice appearing upon every Occasion, can look with such an impartial Eye upon himself, as to believe that the Imputation thrown upon him, is not altogether groundless and unfair? Who, if he were told by Men of a discerning Spirit and a strong Conjecture, of all the evil and absurd Things which that false Heart of his would at one Time or other betray him into, would not believe as little, and wonder as much, as *Hazael* did before him? Thus, for Instance: Tell an angry Person, that he is weak and impotent, and of no Consistency of Mind; tell him, that such or such a little Accident, which he may then despise, and think much below a Passion, shall hereafter make him say and do several absurd, indiscreet, and misbecoming Things: He may perhaps own, that he hath a Spirit of Resentment within him, that will not let him be imposed on, but he fondly imagines, that he can lay a becoming Restraint upon it when he pleaseth, although it is ever running away with him into some Indecency or other.

Therefore, to bring down the Words of my Text to our present Occasion, I shall endeavour, in a further Prosecution of them, to evince the great Necessity of a nice and curious Inspection into the several Recesses of the Heart, that  
being



being the surest and the shortest Method that a wicked Man can take to reform himself: For let us but stop the Fountain, and the Streams will spend and waste themselves away in a very little Time; but if we go about, like Children, to raise a Bank, and to stop the Current, not taking Notice all the while of the Spring which continually feedeth it, when the next Flood of a Temptation riseth and breaketh in upon it, then we shall find that we have begun at the wrong End of our Duty, and that we are very little more the better for it, than if we had sat still, and made no Advances at all.

But, in order to a clearer Explanation of the Point, I shall speak to these following Particulars:

*First*, By endeavouring to prove, *from particular Instances*, that Man is generally the most ignorant Creature in the World of himself.

*Secondly*, By enquiring into the Grounds and Reasons of this Ignorance.

*Thirdly*, and lastly, By proposing several Advantages that *do most assuredly* attend a due Improvement in the Knowledge of ourselves.

*First* then. To prove that Man is generally the most ignorant Creature in the World, of himself.

To



To pursue the Heart of Man through all the Instances of Life in all its several Windings and Turnings, and under that infinite Variety of Shapes and Appearances which it putteth on, would be a difficult and almost impossible Undertaking; so that I shall confine myself to such as have a nearer Reverence to the present Occasion, and do, upon a closer View, shew themselves through the whole Business of Repentance. For we all know what it is to repent; but whether he repenteth him truly of his Sins or not, who can know it?

Now the great Duty of Repentance is chiefly made up of these two Parts, a hearty Sorrow for the Follies and Miscarriages of the Time past, and a full Purpose and Resolution of Amendment for the Time to come. And now, to shew the Falseness of the Heart in both these Parts of Repentance. And,

First, As to a hearty Sorrow for the Sins and Miscarriages of the Time past. Is there a more usual Thing than for a Man to impose upon himself, by putting on a grave and demure Countenance, by casting a severe Look into his past Conduct, and making some few pious and devout Reflections upon it, and then to believe that he hath repented to an excellent Purpose, without ever letting it step forth into Practice, and shew itself in a holy Conversation? Nay, some Persons do carry the Deceit a little higher; who, if they can but  
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bring themselves to weep for their Sins, are then full of an ill-grounded Confidence and Security; never considering, that all this may prove to be no more than the very Garb and outward Dress of a contrite Heart, which another Heart, as hard as the nether Mill-stone, may as well put on: For Tears and Sighs, however in some Persons they may be decent and commendable Expressions of a godly Sorrow, are neither necessary, nor infallible Signs of a true and unfeigned Repentance. Not necessary, because sometimes, and in some Persons, the inward Grief and Anguish of the Mind may be too big to be expressed by so little a Thing as a Tear, and then it turneth its Edge inwards upon the Mind; and like those Wounds of the Body which bleed inwardly, it generally proves the most fatal and dangerous to the whole Body of Sin: Not infallible, because a very small Portion of Sorrow may make some tender Dispositions melt, and break out into Tears; or a Man may perhaps weep at parting with his Sins, as he would to bid the last Farewell to an old Friend that he was sure never to see again.

But there is still a more pleasant Cheat in this Affair, that when we find a Deadness, and a strange Kind of Unaptness and Indisposition to all Impressions of Religion, and that we cannot be as truly sorry for our Sins as we should be, we then pretend to be sorry that we are not more sorry for them; which is not  
less



less absurd and irrational, than that a Man should pretend to be very angry at a Thing, because he did not know how to be angry at all.

But after all, what is wanting in this Part of Repentance, we expect to make it up in the next; and to that Purpose we put on a Resolution of Amendment, which we take to be as firm as a House built upon a Rock; so that let the Floods arise, and the Wind blow, and the Streams beat vehemently upon it, nothing shall shake it into Ruin and Disorder. We doubt not, upon the Strength of this Resolve, to stand fast and unmoved amidst the Storm of a Temptation; and do firmly believe, at the Time we make it, that nothing in the World will ever be able to make us commit those Sins over again, which we have so firmly resolved against.

Thus many a Time have we come to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, with a full Purpose of Amendment, and with as full a Persuasion of putting that same Purpose into Practice; and yet have we not all as often broke that good Purpose, and falsified that same Persuasion, by starting aside, like a broken Bough, into those very Sins, which we then so solemnly and so confidently declared against?

Whereas, had but any other Person entered with us into a Vow so solemn, that he had taken the Holy Sacrament upon it, I believe had he but once deceived us by breaking in



upon the Vow, we should hardly ever after be prevailed upon to trust that Man again, although we still continue to trust our own Hearts, against Reason and against Experience.

This indeed is a dangerous Deceit enough, and will of course betray all those well-meaning Persons into Sin and Folly, who are apt to take Religion for a much easier Thing than it is. But this is not the only Mistake we are apt to run into; we do not only think sometimes that we can do more than we can do, but sometimes that we are incapable of doing less; an Error of another Kind indeed, but not less dangerous, arising from a Diffidence and false Humility. For how much a wicked Man can do in the Business of Religion, if he would but do his best, is very often more than he can tell.

Thus nothing is more common than to see a wicked Man running headlong into Sin and Folly against his Reason, against his Religion, and against his God. Tell him that what he is going to do will be an infinite Disparagement to his Understanding, which, at another Time, he setteth no small Value upon; tell him that it will blacken his Reputation, which he had rather die for than lose; tell him that the Pleasure of the Sin is short and transient, and leaveth a vexatious Kind of a Sting behind it, which will very hardly be drawn forth; tell him that this is one of those Things for which God will most surely bring him to Judgment,



Judgment, which he pretendeth to believe with a full Assurance and Persuasion: And yet for all this, he shutteth his Eyes against all Conviction, and rusheth into the Sin, like a Horse into the Battle; as if he had nothing left to do, but like a silly Child to wink hard, and to think to escape a certain and an infinite Mischief, only by endeavouring not to see it.

And now to shew that the Heart hath given in a false Report of the Temptation, we may learn from this, that the same weak Man would resist and master the same powerful Temptation, upon Considerations of infinitely less Value, than those which Religion offereth, nay, such vile Considerations, that the Grace of God cannot without Blasphemy be supposed to add any manner of Force and Efficacy to them. Thus, for Instance: It would be an hard Matter to dress up a Sin in such soft and tempting Circumstances, that a truly covetous Man would not resist for a considerable Sum of Money; when neither the Hopes of Heaven, nor the Fears of Hell, could make an Impression upon him before. But can any Thing be a surer Indication of the Deceitfulness of the Heart, than thus to shew more Courage, Resolution, and Activity, in an ill Cause, than it doth in a good one? And to exert itself to better Purpose, when it is to serve its own Pride, or Lust, or Revenge, or any other Passion, than when it is to serve God upon the Motives of the Gospel, and upon all



the Arguments that have ever been made use of to bring Men over to Religion and a good Life? And thus having shewn that a Man is wonderfully apt to deceive and impose upon himself, in passing through the several Stages of that great Duty, Repentance; I proceed now in the

Second Place, To enquire into the Grounds and Reasons of this Ignorance, *and to shew whence it cometh to pass, that a Man, the only Creature in the World that can reflect and look into himself, should know so little of what passeth within him, and be so very much unacquainted even with the standing Dispositions and Complexion of his own Heart.* The prime Reason of it is, because we so very seldom converse with ourselves, and take so little Notice of what passeth within us: For a Man can no more know his own Heart, than he can know his own Face, any other Way than by Reflection; he may as well tell over every Feature of the smaller Portions of his Face without the Help of a Looking-glass, as he can tell all the inward Bents and Tendencies of the Soul, those standing Features and Lineaments of the inward Man, and know all the various Changes that this is liable to from Custom, from Passion, and from Opinion, without a very frequent Use of looking within himself.

For our Passions and Inclinations are not always upon the Wing, and always moving towards their respective Objects, but retire now  
and



and then into the more dark and hidden Re-cesses of the Heart, where they lie concealed for a while, until a fresh Occasion calls them forth again: So that not every transient, oblique Glance upon the Mind, can bring a Man into a thorough Knowledge of all its Strengths and Weaknesses; for a Man may sometimes turn the Eye of the Mind inward upon itself, as he may behold his natural Face in a Glafs, and go away, and straight forget what manner of Man he was. But a Man must rather sit down and unravel every Action of the past Day into all its Circumstances and Particularities, and observe how every little Thing moved and affected him, and what manner of Impression it made upon his Heart; this done with that Frequency and Carefulness which the Importance of the Duty doth require, would, in a short Time, bring him into a near and intimate Acquaintance with himself.

But when Men instead of this, do pass away Months and Years in a perfect Slumber of the Mind, without once awaking it, it is no Wonder they should be so very ignorant of themselves, and know very little more of what passeth within them, than the very Beasts which perish. But here it may not be amiss to enquire into the Reasons why most Men have so little Conversation with themselves.

And, first, Because this Reflection is a Work and Labor of the Mind, and cannot be per-



formed without some Pain and Difficulty: For before a Man can reflect upon himself, and look into his Heart with a steady Eye, he must contract his Sight, and collect all his scattered and roving Thoughts into some Order and Compass, that he may be able to take a clear and distinct View of them; he must retire from the World for a while, and be unattentive to all Impressions of Sense; and how hard and painful a Thing must it needs be to a Man of Passion and Infirmary, amidst such a Crowd of Objects that are continually striking upon the Sense, and solliciting the Affections, not to be moved and interrupted by one or other of them! But,

Secondly, Another Reason why we so seldom converse with ourselves, is, because the Business of the World taketh up all our Time, and leaveth us no Portion of it to spend upon this great Work and Labour of the Mind. Thus twelve or fourteen Years pass away before we can well discern Good from Evil; and of the rest so much goeth away in Sleep, so much in the ordinary Business of Life, and so much in the proper Business of our Callings, that we have none to lay out upon the more serious and religious Employments. Every Man's Life is an imperfect Sort of a Circle, which he repeateth and runneth over every Day; he hath a Set of Thoughts, Desires, and Inclinations, which return upon him in their proper Time and Order, and will very hardly be



be laid aside to make room for any Thing new and uncommon: So that call upon him when you please, to set about the Study of his own Heart, and you are sure to find him pre-engaged; either he hath some Business to do, or some Diversion to take, some Acquaintance that he must visit, or some Company that he must entertain, or some cross Accident hath put him out of Humour, and unfitted him for such a grave Employment. And thus it cometh to pass, that a Man can never find Leisure to look into himself, because he doth not set apart some Portion of the Day for that very Purpose, but foolishly deferreth it from one Day to another, until his Glass is almost run out, and he is called upon to give a miserable Account of himself in the other World. But,

Thirdly, Another Reason why a Man doth not more frequently converse with himself, is, because such a Conversation with his own Heart may discover some Vice or some Infirmary lurking within him, which he is very unwilling to believe himself guilty of. For, can there be a more ungrateful Thing to a Man, than to find that upon a nearer View, he is not that Person he took himself to be? That he hath neither the Courage, nor the Honesty, nor the Piety, nor the Humility, that he dreamt he had? That a very little Pain, for Instance, putteth him out of all Patience, and as little Pleasure, softeneth and disarmeth



disarmeth him into Ease and Wantonness? That he hath been at more Pains and Labour, and Cost, to be revenged of an Enemy, than to oblige the best Friend he hath in the World? That he cannot bring himself to say his Prayers without a great deal of Reluctancy; and when he doth say them, the Spirit and Fervour of Devotion evaporate in a very short Time, and he can scarcely hold out a Prayer of ten Lines, without a Number of idle and impertinent, if not vain and wicked Thoughts coming into his Head? These are very unwelcome Discoveries that a Man may make of himself; so that it is no wonder that every one, who is already flushed with a good Opinion of himself, should rather study how to run away from it, than how to converse with his own Heart.

But farther. If a Man were both able and willing to retire into his own Heart, and to set apart some Portion of the Day for that very Purpose; yet he is still disabled from passing a fair and impartial Judgment upon himself, by several Difficulties, arising partly from Prejudice and Prepossession, partly from the lower Appetites and Inclinations. And,

First, That the Business of Prepossession may lead and betray a Man into a false Judgment of his own Heart. For we may observe, that the first Opinion we take up of any Thing, or any Person, doth generally stick close to us; the Nature of the Mind being such, that it cannot but desire, and consequently endeavour



to have some certain Principles to go upon, something fixed and unmoveable, whereon it may rest and support itself. And hence it cometh to pass, that some Persons are with so much Difficulty brought to think well of a Man they have once entertained an ill Opinion of; and perhaps, that too, for a very absurd and unwarrantable Reason. But how much more difficult then, must it be for a Man, who taketh up a fond Opinion of his own Heart, long before he hath either Years or Sense enough to understand it, either to be persuaded out of it by himself, whom he loveth so well; or by another, whose Interest or Diversion it may be to make him ashamed of himself? Then,

Secondly, As to the Difficulties arising from the inferior Appetites and Inclinations, let any Man look into his own Heart, and observe in how different a Light, and under what different Complexions any two Sins of equal Turpitude and Malignity do appear to him, if he hath but a strong Inclination to the one, and none at all to the other. That which he hath an Inclination to, is always dressed up in all the false Beauty that a fond and busy Imagination can give it; the other appeareth naked and deformed, and in all the true Circumstances of Folly and Dishonour. Thus, Stealing is a Vice that few Gentlemen are inclined to; and they justly think it below the Dignity of a Man, to stoop to so base and low a Sin; but no Principle



ciple of Honour, no Workings of the Mind and Conscience, nor the still Voice of Mercy, not the dreadful Call of Judgment, nor any Considerations whatever, can put a stop to that Violence and Oppression, that Pride and Ambition, that Revelling and Wantonness, which we every Day meet with in the World. Nay, it is easy to observe very different Thoughts in a Man, of the Sin that he is most fond of, according to the different Ebbs and Flows of his Inclinations to it. For, as soon as the Appetite is alarmed, and seizeth upon the Heart, a little Cloud gathereth about the Head, and spreadeth a kind of Darkness over the Face of the Soul, whereby it is hindered from taking a clear and distinct View of Things; but no sooner is the Appetite tired and satiated, but the same Cloud passeth away like a Shadow, and a new Light springing up in the Mind of a sudden, the Man seeth much more, both of the Folly, and of the Danger of the Sin, than he did before.

And thus having done with the several Reasons why Man, the only Creator in the World that can reflect and look into himself, is so very ignorant of what passeth within him, and so much unacquainted with the standing Dispositions and Complexions of his own Heart I proceed now, in the

Third and last Place, to lay down several Advantages, that do *most assuredly* attend a due Improvement in the Knowledge of ourselves, And

First,



First, One great Advantage is, that it tendeth very much to mortify and humble a Man into a modest and low Opinion of himself. For, let a Man take a nice and curious Inspection into all the several Regions of the Heart, and observe every Thing irregular and amiss within him; for Instance, how narrow and shortsighted a Thing is the Understanding? Upon how little Reason do we take up an Opinion, and upon how much less sometimes do we lay it down again? How weak and false Ground do we often walk upon with the biggest Confidence and Assurance, and how tremulous and doubtful we are very often, where no Doubt is to be made? Again, How wild and impertinent, how busy and incoherent a Thing, is the Imagination, even in the best and wisest Men? Insomuch, that every Man may be said to be mad, but every Man doth not shew it. Then as to the Passions; how noisy, how turbulent, and how tumultuous are they? How easily are they stirred and set a going, how eager and hot in the Pursuit, and what strange Disorder and Confusion do they throw a Man into? So that he can neither think, nor speak, nor act, as he should do, while he is under the Dominion of any one of them.

Thus, let every Man look with a severe and impartial Eye into all the distinct Regions of the Heart, and, no doubt, several Deformities and Irregularities, that he never thought of, will



will open and disclose themselves upon so near a View; and rather make the Man ashamed of himself, than proud.

Secondly, A due Improvement in the Knowledge of ourselves, doth certainly secure us from the sly and insinuating Assaults of Flattery. There is not in the World a baser, and more hateful Thing than Flattery; it proceedeth from so much Falseness and Insincerity in the Man that giveth it, and often discovereth so much Weakness and Folly in the Man that taketh it, that it is hard to tell which of the two is most to be blamed. Every Man of common Sense can demonstrate in Speculation, and may be fully convinced, that all the Praises and Commendations of the whole World can add no more to the real and intrinsic Value of a Man that they can add to his Stature. And yet, for all this, Men of the best Sense and Piety, when they come down to the Practice, cannot forbear thinking much better of themselves, when they have the good Fortune to be spoken well of by other Persons.

But the Meaning of this absurd Proceeding seemeth to be no other than this: There are few Men that have so intimate an Acquaintance with their own Hearts, as to know their own real Worth, and how to set a just Rate upon themselves, and therefore they do not know but that he who praises them most, may be most in the right of it. For, no doubt, if a Man were ignorant of the true Value of a  
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Thing he loved as well as himself, he would measure the Worth of it, according to the Esteem of him who biddeth most for it, rather than of him who biddeth less.

Therefore, the most infallible Way to disentangle a Man from the Snares of Flattery, is to consult and study his own Heart; for whoever does that well, will hardly be so absurd, as to take another Man's Word before his own Sense and Experience.

Thirdly, Another Advantage from this kind of Study, is this, that it teacheth a Man, how to behave himself patiently, when he has the ill Fortune to be censured and abused by other People. For a Man, who is thoroughly acquainted with his own Heart, doth already know much more Evil of himself, than any Body else can tell him; and when any one speaketh ill of him, he rather thanketh God, that he can say no worse. For, could his Enemy but look into the dark and hidden Re-cesses of the Heart, he considereth what a Number of impure Thoughts he might there see brooding and hovering like a dark Cloud upon the Face of the Soul; that there he might take a Prospect of the Fancy, and view it acting over the several Scenes of Pride, of Ambition, of Envy, of Lust, and Revenge; that there he might tell how often a vicious Inclination hath been restrained, for no other Reason, but just to save the Man's Credit or Interest in the World; and how many unbecome-  
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ing Ingredients have entered into the Composition of his best Actions. And now, what Man in the whole World would be able to bear so severe a Test, to have every Thought and inward Motion of the Heart, laid open and exposed to the Views of his Enemies? But,

Fourthly, and Lastly, Another Advantage of this Kind is, that it maketh Men less severe upon other People's Faults, and less busy and industrious in spreading them. For a Man, employed at Home, inspecting into his own Failings, hath not Leisure enough to take Notice of every little Spot and Blemish that lieth scattered upon others; Or, if he cannot escape the Sight of them, he always passeth the most easy and favourable Construction upon them. Thus, for Instance: Does the Ill he knoweth of a Man proceed from an unhappy Temper and Constitution of Body? He then considereth with himself, how hard a Thing it is, not to be borne down with the Current of the Blood and Spirits, and accordingly layeth some Part of the Blame upon the Weakness of human Nature, for he hath felt the Force and Rapidity of it within his own Breast; although perhaps, in another Instance, he remembereth how it rageth and swelleth by Opposition; and although it may be restrained, or diverted, for a while, yet it can hardly ever be totally subdued.

Or,



Or, has the Man sinned out of Custom? He then, from his own Experience, traceth an Habit into the very first Rise and imperfect Beginnings of it; and can tell by how slow and insensible Advances it creepeth upon the Heart; how it worketh itself by Degrees into the very Frame and Texture of it, and so passeth into a second Nature; and consequently he hath a just Sense of the great Difficulty for him to learn to do Good, who hath been long accustomed to do Evil.

Or, lastly, Hath a false Opinion betrayed him into a Sin? He then calleth to Mind what wrong Apprehensions he hath had of some Things himself; how many Opinions, that he once made no Doubt of, he saith, upon a stricter Examination, found to be doubtful and uncertain; how many more to be unreasonable and absurd. He knoweth further, that there are a great many more Opinions that he hath never yet examined into at all, and which, however, he still believeth, for no other Reason, but because he hath believed them so long already without a Reason. Thus, upon every Occasion, a Man, intimately acquainted with himself, consulteth his own Heart, and maketh every Man's Case to be his own (and so puts the most favourable Interpretation upon it.) Let every Man therefore look into his own Heart, before he beginneth to abuse the Reputation of another, and then he will hardly be so absurd, as to throw a Dart that will so cer-  
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tainly rebound and wound himself. And thus, through the whole Course of his Conversation, let him keep an Eye upon that one great and comprehensive Rule of Christian Duty, on which hangeth not only the Law and the Prophets, but the very Life and Spirit of the Gospel too; *Whatever ye would that Men should do unto you, do yea even so unto them.* Which Rule, that we may all duly observe, by throwing aside all Scandal and Detraction, all Spite and Rancour, all Rudeness and Contempt, all Rage and Violence, and whatever tendeth to makes Conversation and Commerce either uneasy, or troublesome, may the God of Peace grant for JESUS CHRIST his Sake, &c.

Consider what hath been said, and the Lord give you a right Understanding in all Things. To whom, with the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be all Honour and Glory, now and for ever.

FINIS.

